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Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
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A-ONE #0111

05/14/99

~ People Are Talking! ~ Titan Now Core Design ~ Sears to Sell i-Macs
~ NUON Peripherals Shown ~ Pentium III Price Cuts ~ E3 Showdown!
~ Don Thomas Conference! ~ Apple Keeps Moving Up! ~ Pong Anyone?
~ Hasbro Licenses Q*Bert ~ Mickey Mouse Does N64! ~ New PowerBook

-* Gaming Industry Fights Back! *-
-* Woman Sues to Use '7 Dirty Words'! *-
-* Microsoft's "Permatemps" Get Stock Victory *-

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->From the Editor's Keyboard
"~~~~~"

"Saying it like it is!"

Well, the weather has been steadily nice, but a little on the cool side. I've managed to get some work done outside, but have plenty more to finish. The joys of owning your own home, my father keeps reminding me!

In this week's issue, we've included the transcript of the conference in the Atari Advantage Forum on Delphi, held last Saturday, with former Atari Corporation's Don Thomas. It was a small group, but Don kept us informed and entertained for almost two hours! It was a lot of fun; and we hope you enjoy the event, after the fact. The conference brought back a lot of memories of the many conferences held on the various online services of the day (Delphi, CompuServe, and GENie) with countless Atari dignitaries, developers, show organizers, and the like. Perhaps A-ONE can play a role in revitalizing those conferences a bit. We'll see...

Along the lines of fond memories, I'm about to do something that I've been hoping I wouldn't be seriously considering for a number of years to come. As many of you may recall, I've been running Toad Hall BBS for what seems like forever - since late-1987 to be exact. Well, with the decline of Atari, the rise in activity on the internet and the cheap prices of PCs, activity on Toad Hall has been negligible. I've always felt that as long as there was interest, I'd keep the BBS running. It was one way for me to keep supporting Atari users, and, in a way, my form of protest of the growth of the internet. My feeling is that the internet is a vast resource of information, but lacks the feeling of community that an interactive resource such as a BBS provided. Still, you can't buck technology for too long before it takes its toll on the past. So, Toad Hall is about to join the long list of bulletin board systems to fall by the crowded wayside. It's been a lot of fun and source of knowledge and comraderie these past 12 years. I'm going to miss it immensely!

In its place will go a second PC that I've just received. I bought my wife a PC in January, but instead of keeping hers tied up as well as the house phone line, I'll put the second PC in my study with the old BBS line. I essentially use the PC for web browsing and doing the web version of A-ONE. I'm NOT giving up my Falcons and other machines. However, I've found that the PC allows me to utilize my time more efficiently doing research for A-ONE. I enjoy the Atari browser, but for my needs, STiK, STiNG, and CAB just don't provide the speeds I'd need on the Falcon, unfortunately. The Falcons will still be my workhorses for many years to come; I enjoy them too much to change over to the PC world! <g>

Until next time...

Titan Press Release

NEW NAME: CORE DESIGN!

NEW E-MAIL ADDRESS: Now fully implemented!
sales@titan-bss.co.uk
tech@titan-bss.co.uk

** PLEASE UPDATE YOUR ADDRESS BOOK **

<http://titan-bss.co.uk> ('www' not necessary)

SAME: people, products, telephone and fax numbers!

Type Bytes...

ECLIPSE NOW IN PRODUCTION - Reserve one now to avoid disappointment!

The hash sign (#) indicates price in UK pounds sterling

C-LAB MK.X CASES --- from #159.00!

ECLIPSE - NOW EVALUATING THE 4MB ATI CHARGER GRAPHIC CARD.
- up to 1600x1200 at 16-bit, or 1280x1024 at 24-bit!

TEMPEST - NOW BEING DESIGNED WITH POWERPC PROCESSOR
- speeds from 100MHz to 266MHz!!!

CORE DESIGN PC SYSTEMS, from only #299.00!

HD DRIVER V7.7 - Yes, a new version expected any day!
NEW PRICE: #15.95.

HP 400C COLOUR DESKJET: #99.00
HP 695C COLOUR DESKJET: #149.00

EPSON STYLUS COLOUR 400: #139.00

** ECLIPSE - PCI ADAPTOR FOR THE FALCON

PLEASE NOTE:

We are close to shipping Eclipse and are currently taking reservations.
To avoid disappointment, if you require one please contact us now to
ensure delivery.

Expected prices:
UK - 199.00 pounds
Euro* - Eu 298
Germany*- DM 598
France* - FF 1990
USA* - \$320

* Price is dependant on currency exchange rates and import duties.

Distributors:

Germany: AG Computertechnik (also Austria and Switzerland)
e-mail: AG_Comtech@t-online.de
Tel: +49 (8331) 86373
France: ACS Production (also Belgium)

e-mail: alainc@imaginet.fr
USA/Canada: to be confirmed

All other countries will be supplied directly by Core Design.

OVERVIEW

ECLIPSE is an adaptor that accepts standard PCI cards. Currently we are evaluating the 4MB ATI range of graphic cards, so Eclipse will offer up to a massive 1600x1200, 16-bit colour with high refresh rates.

Also being evaluated is the TV Tuner version for outputting to TVs and RGB monitors.

Eclipse offers the best performance of any graphic adaptor, and runs with the full 14MB upgrade (unlike other graphic adaptors!).

fVDI

fVDI (Fenix VDI) is part of an on-going development of the Fenix OS, a replacement operating system. fVDI is being used to drive Eclipse and beta-test versions can now be downloaded for testing against a variety of different applications.

If you would like to assist in the Beta Test program of fVDI prior to Eclipse being available, this can be downloaded free from...

<ftp://rand.thn.htu.se/pub/fVDI/>

If you have problems downloading please mail us:
sales@titan-bss.co.uk

NOTE: Please read the enclosed documentation - we are already aware of certain minor problems which are being eliminated. Our main concern is compatibility with a variety of programs.

NOTE: fVDI also works on standard Falcons.

BENCHMARKS

Currently Eclipse is producing Gembench results with an average of;

1500% *without* NVDI
864% *with* NVDI

Our web site only contains details of figures used with NVDI, but this will be updated shortly.

PRICE

While this development is still being prototyped we expect the Eclipse adaptor, complete with fVDI driver software AND 4MB graphic card, to retail for only 199.00 UK pounds.

NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS ;-)

Resolution Bit planes

640x480 8,16,24,32

800x600 8,16,24,32
1024x760 8,16,24,32
1152x864 8,16,24,32
1280x1024 8,16,24
1600x1200 8,16

Graphic card supplied is the excellent ATI Charger, featuring the RageII 3D chipset.

AVAILABILITY:

We hope that production models could be ready by the end of May 1999. Prototyping of the hardware is already complete - and the fVDI driver software is being finalised.

NOTE: We understand the Centurbo2 is no longer fitted with an expansion through port which will make it difficult to fit Eclipse. We believe there is a technical problem with Centurbo2 in this area.

Tempest, however, WILL be fitted with an expansion port!

** TEMPEST

TEMPEST: The FASTEST accelerator for the Falcon - NOTHING can compete with this! A simple, inexpensive way to accelerate a _standard_ Falcon to achieve amazing performance!

*** Now with the PowerPC (PPC) Processor

This means Tempest could run with a staggering 266MHz processor! Due to the lack of board space, the proposed AGP slot will not be fitted.

Currently being evaluated are the inclusion of;

- * USB ports - multiple peripheral expansion!
- * Dual-processor support when fitted with Afterburner040!

AVAILABILITY:

Not yet determined, but hopefully prototypes will be ready by Q2 1999.

** C-LAB MK.X CASES

Now reduced substantially in price.

MK.X Case, no keyboard - #159.00
MK.X Case, Mega STE keyboard - #179.00 (down #20.00)

Experience the ultimate casing solution for the Falcon.

OPTION (also suitable for standard Falcons):

Internal SCSI adaptor - #39.95 (down #10.00)

** CORE PC SYSTEMS

333MHz Cyrix based system starts at only #299.00!!!

333MHz AMD K6-2 system: from only #349.00 (now even cheaper!)

Features:

- * 100MHz Bus
- * 32MB PC-100 SDRAM
- * 4.3GB hard disk drive

- * 40x CD-ROM drive
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- * 8MB AGP graphics
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ADD (applies to any system):

- * Internal K56 Flex (v.90) modem
- * Windows 98 (installed)
- * 15" monitor

For only #199.00 (also priced separately) - SAVE #20.00!

Many upgrade options to the above, e.g:

32 to 64MB - add #27.00

AMD K6-2 400MHz - add #52.00

Contact us for details on other systems; AMD, Cyrix, Celeron-A, PII and PIII.

** OTHER OFFERS

Atari compatible mouse - now only #9.95!

Genuine branded Sony 1.44MB floppy disks

- #2.79 per box (10)

- #12.95 per 5 boxes (50)

- #24.95 per 10 boxes (100)

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS OFFERS (still current)

FALCON 14MB MEMORY UPGRADE: only #79.95!

MEDIA: Laser toners, Inkjet cartridges, CD-R disks, etc - give us a call.

PRICES, CARRIAGE & STUFF

All prices quoted in this press release are in UK pounds sterling and are denoted by the 'hash' (#) sign. All inclusive prices except for carriage.

Carriage is extra so please call first for further advice. Please make all cheques payable to "TITAN DESIGNS" for the time being - this will change in due course to "Core Design".

Core Design

6 Witherford Way, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 4AX. U.K.

Tel: +44 (0)121-693 6669

Fax: +44 (0)121-414 1630

e-mail: sales@titan-bss.co.uk

Browse our Web site for further details;

<http://titan-bss.co.uk>

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Transcript of a formal Conference with
Formal Conference Transcript
Donald A. Thomas, Jr.
Saturday, May 8, 1999

Welcome to the Atari Advantage Forum on Delphi! Tonight, we're holding a special edition of our weekly conference (usually held on Tuesday evenings at 9:00 p.m. EST). Tonight's special guest is Don Thomas, Jr.

For those of you who don't already know, Don worked for Atari Corp. for a number years and left shortly after the merger with JTS. Don moved on to the SCEA division of Sony, working on the Peripherals side of things in support of the PlayStation. Don recently left SCEA to go to VM Labs. FYI, VM Labs is run by former Atari VP Richard Miller; and the company employs a number of past Atari luminaries such as Bill Rehbock and many others. VM Labs is currently working on the Nuon, a new generation of console gaming.

For those of you unfamiliar with our 'formal' CO procedure, let me briefly set some guidelines. If you have a question, signal me with a ? I'll keep track of who's next and handle the traffic direction. When you've completed your question, please signal with a GA (go ahead) and we can keep the discussion flowing smoothly. We'll be providing a transcript of this conference for those interested.

That's about all I can tell you, without being inaccurate, so I'll let Don make some opening comments and then we'll start taking questions.

Don?

Don Thomas> Thanks Dana...

It's a pleasure to be here. I suppose I should have prepared some opening comments in advance, but, well, I didn't. <g>

I do enjoy conferences like these...

and being a part of the industry.

(enjoy=enjoy) ga

Dan?

AAHZNOTOZ> Thanks.

Don Thomas> you're welcome, next?

<g>

Dana> <g>

Don Thomas> <he>

AAHZNOTOZ> Don, any idea when the nuon DVD players are going to be hitting? I'm getting ready to get a second player (for the bedroom) and thought I'd get one with the nuon in it. GA

Don Thomas> Yes, but we have not announced that yet publicly...
The OEMs that have partnered with us have different product life cycles than traditional video game systems...
We are obliged to abide by their product release and announcement plans. Personally...
I could not wait for NUON. I like DVD that much and...
I did not want to keep collecting VHS, knowing I would eventually switch to DVD...
but I definitely plan to upgrade as soon as NUON emerges. GA

AAHZNOTOZ> Thanks. I love my DVD player too and wouldn't give it up for anything.

Dana> Don, can you explain exactly what Nuon is? GA

Don Thomas> yes. GA

Dana> And would you? <g>

Don Thomas> NUON is...
NUON is a MPEG decoder alternative for any device that performs that function. In addition it hosts a great number of added features including an advanced video game engine. It is being installed now by Motorola into settop boxes and will emerge "soon" in DVD players worldwide. GA

Dana> Thanks.

Don Thomas> No problem. See you next week.

Dana> Advantages over the next next generation PSX and Dreamcast? GA

Don Thomas> NUON is not positioned to compete against PSX2 or Dreamcast. We're not going after the traditional video game market. Our target audience is the couch potato... having said that, NUON feature sets are powerful and will rival the new machines. GA

Dana> Big target audience!

Don Thomas> Ubiquity. <g>

Dana> Can you tell us about VM Labs....
I met Richard Miller at the Falcon...
unveiling in Boston a few years ago - bright guy who seems...
to be heading in a great direction...
I understand there's a number of ex-Atari folks at VM Labd. GA
er. VM Labs

Don Thomas> Sure. VM Labs was founded in 1994 by Richard Miller an ex-VP of Engineering from Atari. He and some of the most talented engineers in Silicon Valley formed VM Labs to create a single chip solution for smart devices that focus on multimedia playback. I think has has succeeded...
and so have a number of prominent partners. GA

Don Thomas> ... 'm so impressed, I left the comfort of Sony on the bet!! GA

Dana> Who else from Atari is now at VM Labs?

Don Thomas> Bill Rehbock, Mike Fulton, Pradip Fatheruia (sp?), Eric Smith, Hans-Martin Kroeber, Nick LeFever, Scott Hunter, Joe Sousa, Greg LaBrec and some others I can't think of right now. GA

Dana> Atari Corp, 3rd generation! <g>

Don Thomas> ...Keep in mind that Atari was a huge company once. Ex-Atari employees are in all the big companies and a major number of the small ones. GA

Dana> Yup, I see names from the past being announced in the news almost weekly!
Is Atari just a part of history now - never to be revived? I know, speculation..... GA

Don Thomas> Any particular day?

Dana> nope

Don Thomas> Question was in reference to your "weekly".

Dana> I know <g>

Don Thomas> Answer to question...

Dana> hmmmm....

Don Thomas> Atari continues as a Coin-Op namesake and also is popping up on numerous retro game releases for many systems...
I don't see Atari ever being re-established as its own company again, but I do see the trend toward retro games continuing. GA

Dana> Those games from yesteryear are hard to kill off!

Don Thomas> I don't think anyone wants to kill them off, they just want them to be profitable. <g> GA

Dana> Pac-Man 2001!

Don Thomas> In Pac-Man 2001 ---...

Dana> lol

Don Thomas> Our fearless hero takes up arms and marches the dark corridors filled with glowing pills. Will he down the enemy?...
I hope not! GA

Dana> GA Bob

Bob> Don, I can't help but feel that if Atari had produced a quality line of PC clones, it might have survived. Was this ever discussed there?

Don Thomas> Atari did make PC clones. ABC Computers. I own one. Trouble is Atari could not compete. By the time Jack found the way to get all the components cheap enough, larger clone companies had already beat

them to the punch...

I sat in on a number of sales presentations including CompUSA. CompUSA made it clear that they had plenty of clone sources without having to risk their reputation on a line from a video game company. GA

Dana> Did that reputation (video game company) really do that much damage?

Don Thomas> I think they were at least 5 years too late trying to do that. GA depends on definition of damage...

Dana> Atari wasn't considered a serious player. Even with the early success of the ST.

Don Thomas> did it decrease the mass markets likelihood of buying "real" computers from them? Yes. Imagine if Tonka introduced a line of computers tomorrow. Would you suggest buying those to your employer? GA

.Bob> He's right there, even after I got my ST, people would say "Atari - that's a game machine". Thanks. GA

AAHZNOTOZ> It was the same even back in the days of the 8-bit.

Dana> I agree with you, just asking! <g>

Don Thomas> It was the same as the days as 8-bit, but... People didn't have a prayer of putting a room size IBM computer into their home. The 8-bit computers were wonderful because they offered computer-like capabilities for an affordable price. When PCs dropped far enough in price, the mass market didn't have to buy toys any longer. GA

Dana> Because IBM had the name recognition as a serious machine.

Don Thomas> IBM, in my view, became a symbol of compatibility more than it did a brand name in the eyes of the consumer. Many people didn't care if IBM made it, they just cared that it was compatible. GA

Dana> When did Jack (or Sam) realize that they were no longer a possible contender, before or after the Falcon's release?

Don Thomas> I can't know when they finally realized things were not recoverable in the computer arena. I think it was about the time the Falcon started shipping. By that time, they hoped to have a lot more orders than they had. GA

AAHZNOTOZ> I gotta run. It was nice chatting! Don, let me know if you hear of any game companies in Denver. I'd love to get back into games again, but don't want to leave here. ;-)

[At this point, we lost Don for a few minutes]

Bob> huh?

Joe> Uh oh.

AAHZNOTOZ> Oops. Dana, could you pass that along to him for me? Gotta go. ;-)

Dana> sure

AAHZNOTOZ> Thanks! Bye!

Dana> waiting for Don to find his way back in...

Rob@atari-users.> SO Joe... can you send that Beer over and chips?

Dana> lol

Rob@atari-users.> or was Dana bringing the food?

Dana> nope, joe has food _and_ drink

Bob> I got the wimmen here!

Joe> <g> You got here too late Rob. The beer is gone and the chips have been reduced to a few crumbs. A six-pack and a bag of ruffles doesn't go as far as it used to. <G>

Rob@atari-users.> lol

Dana> he's b-a-a-c-c-k

Don Thomas> Whhha

Dana> we didn't do it!

Don Thomas> Then the forum software said I needed a group code?

Bob> I swear Sam is somewhere around here...

Dana> Anyway.....Where were we?

Don Thomas> You were telling us what's on the Spice Channel tonight. <g>

Dana> ahhhh!

Dana> How did Atari lose its edge with the Jaguar? Lose steam? Not enough money? Or just no sales?

Don Thomas> Atari never had an edge with Jaguar. The equipment was good, but they never did sell enough units to make the big software companies drool. Pretty much a marketing flop. Very difficult to launch a video game system with just 30 million dollars give or take. GA

Dana> But they tried anyway?

Do you think the problems lay with the Tramiels, or was Atari never considered a... "legitimate" player?

Don Thomas> Jack always believed that if you build a better mouse trap, the world will beat a path to your door... That worked in the 8-bit days, but nowadays, you have to buy your customers even if the product is good. GA

Dana> I guess you answered both questions! <g>
So why JTS?

Don Thomas> I credit the Tramiels for breathing a new decade into Atari that would not have been there if Jack never took it over from Warner. There would have been ways to turn Atari around and Jack seemingly did that for a while, but his eyes were bigger than his appetite. Federated was a mistake that cost \$67 million. His heart was in the right

place I think... just to ambitious too fast... and not focused. GA
JTS was a way out with bankrupting his family. GA

Dana> without bankrupting, I hope!

Don Thomas> si.

Dana> Why not someone who would do something with the Atari name & product?
It...seemed like JTS wasn't going to do anything, and didn't. GA

Don Thomas> JTS had no intention to do anything with Atari, but had to let the
SEC believe they would to get the "merger" approved. JTS was in desperate need
of cash and Jack had it. GA

Dana> Is Jack & Sam still with JTS?
Or is the company kaput? GA

Don Thomas> JTS has filed for Chapter 11. I think Jack may have been on the
board, but otherwise the Tramiels are uninvolved as far as I know. GA

Dana> Vacationing in Toronto somewhere! <g>

Don Thomas> <g>

Don Thomas> a needle pulling thread...

Dana> So...what do you think of Hasbro's decision to make the Jaguar an
open platform?

Don Thomas> I think its a means to an end for them and could be nice for
some undone projects to see the light of day. GA

undon=undone Sorry! <g>

Joe> On the computer side of things, many of us just can't seem to bring
ourselves to leave our trusty Atari computers behind and move on. Any
thoughts on why that might be? Are we just fanatics?

Don Thomas> Well...
My wife was my high school sweetheart. She was with me during an
important time in my life. She is a integral portion of my fondest memories
and someone who has always been there whenever I needed
her. I've grown to trust her and enjoy being with her...
I think human beings like being near people and things they have
learned to trust...
I think people like to hold on to the most important parts of their past...
For me, computers and video games helped link a special interest to
those shared by friends and colleagues...

Joe> Not to mention saving a buck along the way. <g>

Don Thomas> That's why I still love the Atar brand and why Commodore users
love the Vic 20, etc. GA
<tear rolling down cheek.>

Dana> We all know Don still has a soft spot...
Any new plans for Atari, hence his web site at ICWHEN. Any new
plans/additions for it?

Don Thomas> Any new plans for what?... ICWhen?

Dana> yes.
the site. Anything new, Atari-related?

Don Thomas> My plans for it are never ending. I have amassed literally thousands of resource materials and I enjoy finding time to go through them and adding to the historical content. Then, for fun and diversion, I'll add games and other features. GA

Dana> Cool. I was hoping to be able to read new chapters!

Don Thomas> I'm working on a A-One resource page now.

.Dana> <g>

Don Thomas> The real chapters of the "book" are begun with each new year.

Joe> A-ONE? What's that??

Don Thomas> A-One is only the most comprehensive venue for up-to-date news and information related to Atari and classic games... duh!

Dana> I paid him to say that!

Don Thomas> Big time too. <g>

TJ I thought _everybody_ knew that!

Dana> <g>
Oops, better send out more checks!

Dana> We're going on an hour and a half, more questions for Don?
I don't want to hog the mike!

Rob@atari-users.> Don.. What are your feeling on the Atari TOS Clones?
(Milan)

Don
Thomas> No we're not, we started twenty minutes late. You liar! <g>

Bob> No, I just want to say I like his web site so much I made it my home page! Lots of good STuff there!

Dana> <g>

TJ> So...I wasn't the only late one!

Don Thomas> Would you like to be in my next visitor spotlight?...
I'm a bit late updating that.

Dana> who?

Bob> Visitor spotlight?

Don Thomas> .bob... the guy who made it his homepage silly. Not YOU!
<g>

Dana> "Fan o' the month!
that's why I asked!

Don Thomas> Used to be "of the month", but VM Labs hogs a lot of time... hard to keep up with.

Bob> I didn't see one when I visited today... what happened to the last one? Did he disappear? <G>

Don Thomas> I changed it from Visitor of the month to visitor spotlight.

Bob> I'll think about it... I don't want any Police Departments to see me, though?

Dana> I think there was a question on the table regarding TOS clones.

Bob> Sorry

Don Thomas> Dana, I miss these conferences. <g> I remember doing them on GENie and CIS.

Dana> We can do more!

Don Thomas> What was the question?

Dana> Rob, care to repeat?

Rob@atari-users.> sure..
Your thoughts on the Tos Clones

Don Thomas> I'm sorry. I don't know if I understand the question. Are we talking legal or illegal clones?
(I suspect illegal)

Dana> Milan, etc.
legal, I thought.

Rob@atari-users.> thanks Dana... Yes the Milan..

Don Thomas> Is Milan the german clone?

Rob@atari-users.> Yes

Joe> As far as I know, the TOS version is licensed. That would make it legal.

Rob@atari-users.> Forgive me... but doesn't Hasbro own the rights to the Computer copyrights also?

Don Thomas> Yes, I believe it is, but I did not know they were still around to tell the truth.

Yes, Hasbro has those rights, but assuredly they have to honor existing agreements when the sale took place.

I don't have any particular thoughts about Milan except that I am elated to learn they're still around and able to give people product they feel they need. GA

TJ> I'm afraid I'm not knowledgeable enough to ask pointed, intelligent questions of Don. I've been in an 8-bit time warp until six months ago. Now I'm stuck in a 16/32 bit time warp. <G>

Dana> So are we, TJ!!

TJ> I'm still catching up!

Don Thomas> TJ, I wasn't sure I knew enough to answer questions, but I find myself actually answering a few. <g> GA

Joe> Don, you've always been very candid and full of insight... What do you see in the future for the video gaming industry? Anything new and exciting?

Don Thomas> I think Sony, Nintendo and Sega will continue trying to outdo each other until they eventually only appeal to techno-people. In the meantime, companies like Hasbro and Tiger (a Hasbro property) will figure out that a lot of people like to play simpler games. GA

Joe> Does that contribute to the "retro" gaming trend that we talked about earlier?

Don Thomas> I think retro gaming is a fulfillment of just that theory. I actually think a 2600-like game system will one day be popular again. While the costly systems get more complex and realistic, there will be a growing demand for raw simplicity again... where the challenge is in beating scores and learning patterns. GA

TJ> Don, you see...A former fellow user group member gave me his Mega ST4 six months ago--actually , he gave me all his remaining Atari stuff. I've been doing a lot of studying this winter. My name is quite well-known in the remaining 8-bit circles, but I'm practically unknown among STers. Sorry about that. I hit RETURN just as I saw Joe's question.

Dana> I have to agree with that analysis! I still l enjoy playing a pinball machine rather than a "mindless" video game that has no plot other than to blast everything in sight!

TJ> I always liked text adventures best--except for Star Raiders, of course!

Don Thomas> TJ, me also. In fact I have purchased all the Activison re-releases of Infocom games for the PC. GA

Joe> Today's faster machines (both computers and video game systems) make it possible to emulate those old systems. Do you see any trend toward licensed emulators for that purpose?

Don Thomas> Joe, the problem with emulators is that profit-oriented companies cannot control the licensing very well. I think as a matter of practice, companies will not prefer emulation over building a demand for an independent system. GA

Dana> Don, what's your fondest memory at Atari?
And worst? <g>

Don Thomas> Fondest memory...

I should determine one to tell for when people ask me...

Remember, as much as liked the products we were making, it was also a career...

So my fondest memories are probably those that brought me close to colleagues and staff... such as trade shows or when we all helped out in the warehouse to repack something. The worst memories are those when Garry Tramiel would have final checks in his back pocket and walk past my desk to ask a co-worker into his office. GA

Dana> ouch!

Rob@atari-users.> WHat was/is your favorite Atari Product?

Don Thomas> I told you that if you shove the finger up there far enough, Dana, it might hurt.

Don Thomas> Favorite product...

Dana> <g>

Don Thomas> My favorite Atari product will always be the six button version of the Atari VCS.

favorite=favorite, okay Dana? <g>

Dana> si

Dana> I'll utilize the Don Thomas spell-checker before releasing the final transcript!

Don Thomas> hehe. Much appreciated.

Dana> What's your role at VM Labs (for those who don't know)?
[and missed the opening 'credits'] <g>

Don Thomas> I am the Director of Peripherals Licensing primarily. I work with companies interested in making peripherals for our technology. GA i.e. gamepads, joysticks, etc. GA

Dana> Will VM Labs be doing any software (with the likes of [Jeff] Minter and [Scott] Legrand on board)?

Don Thomas> VM Labs is a technology company. We will not be publishing any of our own software. GA

TJ> I always thought it was unfortunate that Warner named the 2600 "Video Computer System." It was the basis of the Game machine image for Atari's "real" computers. Lately I thought they should have embraced the game image, as long as it was there, long before the Jag. "The Game Machine that does so much more..." would have been a good slogan. Of course, I know nothing of business. <G>

Don Thomas> ... or building any of our own machines. GA

Don Thomas> TJ I don't disagree with you for the timeframe. GA

TJ> Hindsight is _always_ 20/20.

Don Thomas> Maybe I should walk backwards? <g>

Dana> What is the role for Minter and Legrand, then, if not games? Just curious.

Don Thomas> Both of them are working on firmware projects. A good game programmer usually has good skills to be used on non-game projects as well. But, bear in mind, that I did not say those boys were not working on games. I just said that VM Labs will not be a publisher. <g> GA
firmware=firmware <sigh>

Dana> I'll remember to be more specific! <g>

Don Thomas> Okay then. <g>

Dana> Are they currently working on any games, to be published by someone other than VM Labs?

Don Thomas> Right this very second? I really couldn't say what they're doing at the moment. They might be eating. <g>

Dana> ...one in every crowd....

Don Thomas> Hehe. You will definitely see their coding in NUON specific content if that answers your question. <g>

Dana> Titles, working or otherwise? And not sir, mr., etc.!

Don Thomas> I don't know what's been announced and what hasn't to tell you the truth, so I better stay away from those specifics. GA

TJ> Well, I really have to go, I guess. :(Nice to meet you, Don.

Don Thomas> Likewise TJ, Thanks for stopping by.

Dana> Any other questions for Don?

Rob@atari-users.> Just Thanks for doing the conference..

Bob> No, I appreciate him being here with us!

Dana> Any closing comments, Don?

Don Thomas> It was fun. Thanks for the eats.

Rob@atari-users.> or did Dana bug the hell out of you to do it?

Dana> he did!

Joe> Yes Don. Thanks a lot for taking time out of what I know is a very busy schedule.

Dana> We'll have to do it again, sooner rather than later!

Bob> Now, if we could just get Jack and ask him a few questions

Rob@atari-users.> going to check out the NUON page...

Don Thomas> Dana has been very polite and has asked more times than he should have had to, but each time professionally. (creep). In any case, I don't know what to say in parting except... Thanks Mom!

Dana> lol

Dana> Well, than I guess we can end the formal portion of this conference and let it go crazed mode! <g>

Don Thomas> tada!

Dana> Thanks for being here, Don.!!

Don Thomas> Ooops and I though I was here.
You're welcome.

Dana> I miss all of the CO's that were prevalent in the past!

Don Thomas> ditto

Don Thomas> Back then 15 people might attend. <g>

Dana> All part of the culture of being an Atari user! lol

Rob@atari-users.> well Then why not TRY to start them up again Dana??
Like the atariusers.com site does...

[End of formal conference]

=~::~~==

PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
jmirando@portone.com

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. There's been lots going on around me lately, and I must admit that I'm even more bogged down than usual because of it.

The one bright spot in the past week was a piece of email I received from a semi-local former Atari user who wanted to give his beloved Atari wares a good home. The only proviso was that I had to pick everything up at his house. Since it was only a matter of ten or fifteen miles, this was not a problem.

After finding the house and meeting the owner, he showed me the collection of both hardware and software that he had acquired over the years. A collection to rival my own. Two computers, two printers, two monitors, a Spectre GCR, and more software than most computer stores carried for the ST at the height of its popularity. And for all of this, the owner asked only that the equipment and software be used. A promise that I had no problem making since I still use my Atari computers daily, and can always find a use for another. Add to that the fact that I know of several people who could make use anything that I can't make use of. The owner was quite happy to hear that I understood his feelings about this equipment. He was only moving on to another system because he could no longer do the things he needs to do on the Atari. And as anyone who's read my columns knows, I don't have a problem with switching platforms because you NEED to. Only those sheep who are content to follow the crowd without stopping to wonder if they really need to invoke my ire.

While driving home, my mind wandered onto the subject of how the scene would have played out if this had been PeeCee equipment. First of all, were it PC stuff, it would probably have been unceremoniously thrown into the trash. Either that, or the owner would have wanted anywhere from half to two thirds of the original cost of all the items. There doesn't seem to be any middle-of-the-road attitude in the PC world.

At any rate, not only was the owner happy that someone actually wanted his equipment, but also that someone understood its worth. While most of this equipment is quite dated it is, when all is said and done, still quite useful and probably more usable than much of what's available on the PC platform. But do me a favor and don't tell PC users that... let's keep it our little secret, huh? <grin>

Well, let's get on with the column...

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
=====

Wayne Chayer asks:

"I am looking for a Windows 3.11 printer driver for an Atari Model SLM804 dot matrix printer. Anyone know if this will work on Windows and where I can find a driver?"

Kenneth Medin tells Wayne:

"Maybe you can try an Epson FX driver?. SMM804 lacks some of the graphics modes but it might work. Also there is the "Generic printer driver" that should work. I think this driver will not use graphic printout at all? The SMM has the Atari ASCII as default but several national character sets are also available."

Steve Stupple adds:

"Use an Epson print driver; FX for 9-pin, LQ for 24-pin."

Wayne tells all:

"I was able to get the printer functioning with the generic driver and just the standard font. This was with all (8) dip switches in "off". I couldn't get it to work with the Epson or several other drivers I tried. I presume the dip switches need to be set properly. Do you know if any information is available on dip switch settings for this printer?"

On one of my favorite subjects, STinG, David Sime asks:

"What internet providers... support Atari St running STing & CAB? Does anyone have examples of the dial.scr scripts for these?"

Nick Bales tells David:

"Just about any ISP will do. Avoid people like AOL or Compuserve who use non-standard protocols. Anything else should be ok.

Forget about dial scripts. I think this is where lots of people go wrong. Just because the default.cfg and dial.scr files are editable doesn't mean that they have to be editable. Lots of people go in there and change things and then STinG will no longer work.

My advice is just to go into the STinG Dialer, and set the following information from there:

-Phone Number
-Login

- Password
- DNS Numbers (even these are not always required)

This should be enough to get basically up and running, and doesn't need tweaking unless you have serious performance problems. Read the docs for more information, or the Quick FAQ for a quick setup procedure."

bob King adds:

"In my humble opinion, ZETNET are by far the best. They are not free, but have a cative Atari specific support including dedicated Sting SCR and CFG files. See the Atari help page at URL:

<http://users.zetnet.co.uk/robertg/zetnet/index.htm>"

Mike Kerslake adds his experiences:

"I've used the following three ISPs with an Atari over the years:

CIX is very good for Atari users, both for internet stuff and the excellent conferencing facilities. There's around 250 Atari users on CIX. I use STing/CAB/NEWSie with CIX and it works absolutely perfectly! There's a lot of help available to get you up and running with STing etc on CIX. It took me just a minute or so to edit the scripts to get a first-time connection!

Zetnet are pretty good as well for internet only stuff, and there's around 100 Atari users. I used STiK with CAB, but STing will work just fine as well. There's quite a few knowledgeable Atari users that should be able to help you out here.

Demon is also accessible with an Atari, although I left because their service was abysmal a few years ago! I used NOS originally, then moved onto OASIS 1.35, then after severe connectivity problems ditched Demon and went to Zetnet! I vaguely recall using STiK and CAB with Demon a bit, but it was years ago!

Some of the free ISPs are useable with an Atari, though most seem to require that you use a PC (spit!) initially to sign up, but after that you can extract the script details and connect with STing and use the usual tools!

Price-wise CIX is the most expensive at about 17.50 a month, but that includes the unrivalled (IMO) conferencing and unlimited internet access, as well as the usual web site space. You can take a cheaper CIX option at 7.50 a month which includes 2 hours a month internet/conferencing, time above this is payable by the minute.

Zetnet is about 10 pounds a month.

Demon was about 11.75 a month when I last looked.

As far as connectivity, reliability and newsfeeds go, I've found CIX to be the best of the three. I did run CIX and Zetnet in tandem for about three months, and CIX was better overall. Can't say much about Demon because my experience with them was not good. They even admitted that all the problems were their fault, but refused to reduce my bill or pay compensation for all the wasted phone calls. I even have the letter in which they admit they were at fault!!!

I guess/hope they have improved since!"

Derryck Croker tells David:

"No UK ISPs directly support the Atari.

Otherwise I know for a fact that the following ISPs will work with the software you mention:

CiX (strong Atari presence in CiX conferencing)
Zetnet (strong Atari presence with a newsgroup)
FreeServe
Connect4Free"

"Paul at Cylinders" asks:

"I have been told that it is possible to boot *.IMG files from disk, effectively allowing you to 'upgrade' from the TOS version that your ST has on ROM. I have grabbed a couple of *.IMG files from the Little Green Desktop, and I have also found a little program called quicktos.prg. - but it doesn't seem to like the *.IMG files I've got.

I want to use TOS 2.06 of my STf (which has TOS 1.02 on ROM). Can anybody recommend a good TOS booter program that I can use?"

Nick Bales tells Paul:

"You'll find some stuff that should do the job here:
<http://www.freeweb.org/computer/vezz/atari/stsoft.htm>

> I want to use TOS 2.06 of my STf (which has TOS 1.02 on ROM). Can
> anybody recommend a good TOS booter program that I can use?
>

You probably won't benefit much from this [using TOS 2.06 in this fashion], as loading a disk based TOS takes more time to boot, and lots of RAM. For TOS 2.06, we are talking about at least 256K, probably more, so if this is on a 1Mb machine, you won't have much RAM left for most programs, and you can just forget it on a 520STF.

Your best bet is to get a real TOS switcher board that allows you to switch from TOS 1.02 to 2.06."

Fred Horvat asks for info about MiNT:

"I have an Atari TT030 and a Mega4St that I am interested in running and learning Mint. Where can I get information on Mint for a unix beginner like myself?

I did load Mint v.095 from Umich and it appears to be installed correctly. Also where can I go to get the latest version of Mint for Internet browsing and other applications?

One last question, how is the Whiteline MINT98 CD-ROM? Systems for Tomorrow and Chromagic carry it here in the States for \$35.00. I was wondering how good of a source of information it is."

Nick Bales tells Fred:

"I'm afraid there is no central beginner's MiNT resource at the moment, and that is rather a shame.

The version you mentioned is old. What you need the KGMD/KEMD distribution from ftp.funet.fi. It's a large package to download, especially if you want the MiNTnet package too. Follow the instructions that come with the KEMD package.

Once you've got that, replace the old MINT.PRG with the latest MINT.

There is supposed to be a new distribution coming out soon, the NMD, but Martin-Eric Racine who is responsible for this is still finishing it. I'm personally waiting for this before reinstalling MiNT."

David Leaver posts this tidbit about a problem that I just recently noticed myself with the latest version of STinG:

"Each time I boot, STinG 1.20 reports failure to load the DNS cache. STinG seems to write a new version at each session but is then unable to load it at the next. I have tried deleting the file to ensure that a new one is written, but it still can't load.

It doesn't appear to affect operation, although I assume that it is slowing down resolving."

Ronald Andersson tells David:

"That means either that the cache file is missing, or that it has become corrupted in a way that the resolver module can detect. There are some types of corruption which it can't detect, so occasionally it may become necessary to delete the file 'manually'.

Writing a new CACHE.DNS is normal when it can't load the file because it is missing.

Not being able to load on the next bootup, however, is of course not normal.

At the next boot after deleting the file, loading will naturally fail, but then it should create a new functional file, and that should load on later boots.

It would cause a lot more DNS queries to be sent than is intended, rather than looking for addresses in the accumulated cache. But if the internal RAM cache works ok, you might not notice it very much, because it only happens once per address per session.

There are mainly three things that affect this.

- 1: In DEFAULT.CFG you need to have "DNS_CACHE = 100" though "100" can be changed to some other limit. (it limits the number of cached addresses)
- 2: In DEFAULT.CFG you need to have "DNS_SAVE = TRUE" this enables saving of cached addresses to the file.
- 3: In DEFAULT.CFG you need to have "ALLOCMEM=100000" where "100000" can be some other number but should not be lower than 50000 and preferably higher.

The ALLOCMEM value reserves RAM for use by STinG and its modules. This is the same RAM from which buffers is taken for all data packets, and it is also used for the internal DNS cache. If this STinG RAM is exhausted at any time, then caching may fail, and that failed cache might then overwrite the existing file. That depends on when and how it happens.

A fourth thing which has caused problems in the past is the use of IP addresses in numerical form, which are unknown to the name servers on Internet even though there are real servers at those addresses.

If none of the above seems to fit your problem, then I am out of ideas for the moment."

Dave Murphy tells Dave Leaver:

"I had this problem too.
My DNS_CACHE entry was set to 64, I changed it to 128 & no more problems.
Not sure if this helps any - is the resolver expecting a bigger cache?"

Ronald Andersson tells both Daves:

"I haven't made any such change, and 64 is a mighty big number for such things. That should not normally be exceeded in a single session. But I do use 100 myself (for no special reason) since a long time back.

I'll have to look over the code again to find the reason for such a dependency, but in the meantime I suppose it would be a good idea for David too to try your method. It should not harm anything, and it might help, since you say it did so for you."

Well folks, that's it for this week. Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Hasbro Licenses Q*Bert to Sony!
    " " " " " " " " " " " " " " SC&T & VM Labs: NUON Peripherals!
                                Gaming "Battles" at E3!
                                Gaming Industry Fights Back!
                                And much more!
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->From the Editor's Controller - Playin' it like it is!
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We have a lot of gaming news this week! This is probably the busiest time of the year for gaming news because of the E3 show going on right now. Everyone is showing their newest products, and the news is flowing like

crazy.

This week we'll be providing with with a lot of news that's come out prior to E3 starting. Next week will appear to be an issue dominated by the news coming out of E3 - the new games and other product announcements by the various systems and developers/publishers. For the gaming public, this is almost as good as Christmas!

Until next time...

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Hasbro Interactive Inks Deal With Sony Signatures to License Worldwide Rights for Arcade Classic Q*Bert

Leading entertainment software publisher Hasbro Interactive announced Monday it has signed a license agreement with Sony Signatures, consumer products division of Sony Pictures Entertainment, to bring back the arcade classic Q*Bert to the PC and video game console platforms. Q*Bert will join Hasbro Interactive's all-star '99 line up of action arcade favorites including Frogger, Centipede, Pong, Missile Command and The Next Tetris. Hasbro Interactive will unveil Q*Bert at the Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3), May 13-15 in Los Angeles.

“Q*Bert is one of my all-time favorite games, and I am delighted it will join our growing line of action arcade classics,” said Tom Dusenberry, President of Hasbro Interactive. “As we have learned with Frogger’s success, a lovable character with quick, approachable game play is truly a winning combination.”

"Hasbro Interactive is an ideal partner to bring Q*Bert into the new millennium," said Peter Dang, Executive Vice President of Licensing, Sony Signatures Licensing. "They understand how to capture the essence of classic game play while enhancing it for today's gaming hardware. They also know how to create a mass market sensation."

Q*Bert, the big-nosed, fuzzy ball of orange fun, bounced into gamers' hearts in 1982 as the star of the quick-paced, puzzle-solving arcade game. Q*Bert's broad-based appeal and addictive game play made it a huge success with a loyal fan following.

Hasbro Interactive looks to bring Q*Bert back to life in 3D with the original game where players complete a solid-colored pyramid by jumping from cube to cube, and new 3D worlds loaded with new puzzle challenges and game play enhancements, bright 3D graphics and numerous game play levels. It won't be easy because Q*Bert's old nemesis are back, too - Coily, Uggs, Wrong-Way, Slick and Sam are ready to change block colors, wreak havoc and crush Q*Bert at every opportunity.

Hasbro Interactive's success with publishing 3D-enhanced versions of classic arcade games began in 1997, when the company licensed Frogger, from

KONAMI Co., Ltd. in Tokyo. The blockbuster arcade hit from the 80s proved he had legs in the 90s and Hasbro Interactive has sold more than 2.5 million copies of Frogger for the PC and PlayStation game console. In March, the two-year-old title hopped its way to #2 on the PC games sales chart, according to PC Data. In 1998, Hasbro Interactive made another bold move and acquired the rights to over 75 Atari game properties including Pong, Missile Command, Centipede, Tempest, Breakout, and Asteroids. Most recently the company announced a license agreement with Namco for the rights to eleven arcade classics including the legendary Pac-Man.

''With Q*Bert we now have access to all of the greatest arcade properties," added Dusenberry. ''These classic titles are truly magical because their play patterns are fun for people of all ages, and once you start playing you just can't stop."

New versions of Q*Bert will begin shipping this fall for the PlayStation game console and Windows 95/98 CD-ROM.

Video Game Industry To Meet As Stage Set For Big Battle

The \$6.3 billion video game industry's biggest trade show gets under way this week in Los Angeles, setting the stage for the coming battle between the dominant Sony PlayStation and the new Dreamcast from Sega.

As the first battles in this marketing war rage across the giant show floor at the Los Angeles Convention Center, another fight is also expected, as U.S. legislators attack the interactive software and entertainment industries for developing games and movies that many believe are too violent.

The issue came to light again after the high school massacre in Littleton, Colo., where two gunmen killed 12 students, a teacher and themselves last month. The teen-aged shooters belonged to a clique called the ''Trenchcoat Mafia" and enjoyed violent movies and video games.

''It's a really hot topic and it's probably going to heat up especially (this) week when some congressional hearings start, right during E3," said Ben Rinaldi, senior editor of GameWEEK, an industry publication based in Wilton, Conn.

''But I don't think they will hold back at all because of this. Everyone will be showing their best games, regardless of violence or not," he said.

For their part, Sony and Sega are set to go head-to-head. Sega of America, which in recent years has sunk to the No. 3 video game console maker, plans a \$100 million marketing blitz for the U.S. launch in September of its new Dreamcast system, in a bid to regain lost market share.

Sony Computer Entertainment America, a U.S. division of Sony Corp., is expected to roll out its highly-touted next generation PlayStation II sometime next year, in time for the fourth quarter holiday shopping season.

The Dreamcast, which was launched in Japan by Sega's parent company, Sega Enterprises Ltd. in November, will come out almost a year ahead of the new Sony. The console has much faster and more realistic graphics and will also be the first video game console to include Internet access.

''There is a lot of buzz about hardware about who will win the next hardware platform battle," said James Lin, an analyst with Wedbush Morgan. ''They (Sega) do have a nice 12-month window, but with such a huge installed base in North America and worldwide ... I think Sony will retain its lead."

Still, San Francisco-based Sega of America hopes to make life miserable for Sony and Nintendo at the Los Angeles trade show, dubbed E3, and this autumn.

''Consumers will not be able to go on with daily life without hearing about Dreamcast. Sega will be everywhere," Bernie Stolar, president of Sega, said in a conference call last month, to discuss the launch of Dreamcast.

At the E3 show, Sega is hosting a press briefing to provide more details on its Internet strategy before the show begins, plus plenty of demonstrations of Dreamcast and some of the 10-12 video game titles that will be available at launch.

Sony is not worried about losing its position of dominance -- with an estimated 60 percent to 62 percent share of the market -- and plans to tout to the vast audience at E3 the many new software titles for the current PlayStation at the show.

One of Sony's key weapons, apart from new console's ultra-fast graphics and processing power, is that the new PlayStation will run games written for the current version.

''Our main focus (at E3) is not on the PlayStation II, but to further the market for the current PlayStation. We have a fabulous line of software titles we will be introducing at the show," Kazuo Hirai, president of Sony Computer Entertainment America, said. ''We can tell consumers that you can invest in the current games and your library will be intact."

Meanwhile, No. 2 Nintendo of America, the U.S. unit of Nintendo Co. Ltd., plans to tout its Star Wars game, ''Racer," developed by LucasArts Entertainment for the N-64 and the PC, based on a pod racing sequence in the widely-anticipated movie, "Star Wars: Episode I -- The Phantom Menace".

According to the show's organizers, the Interactive Digital Software Association, more than 1,900 games for both the personal computer and video game consoles will be launched at the show, which starts Thursday, May 13.

Sony's Hirai points out that under the industry's rating system, which is not yet mandatory, games rated M -- for those of an extreme nature -- are less than 10 percent of the market.

''We would not have grown into this sort of an industry if what we were offering was for a limited audience," Hirai said. "That really means that by and large the titles are things that anyone can enjoy with their entire family."

SC&T and VM Labs Co-Operatively Announce Exciting
New Line of NUON Designed Peripheral Products

SC&T International Inc., and VM Labs Inc., of Mountain View, Calif.,

co-operatively announced Monday a strategic licensing partnership for the forthcoming NUON technology platform.

SC&T has entered into a licensing agreement with VM Labs, to launch a new line of peripheral products supporting the NUON technology. Initial products will focus on SC&T's Per4merr, Ultimate Per4merr, and Air Racer(TM), racing wheel and game controller products. These NUON specific products by Per4mer, will be targeted at the retail mass market channel.

The NUON architecture is expected to achieve more than fifty (50%) percent market penetration in worldwide sales of DVD players by the end of the year 2000. It is expected that the technological advances found in DVD players will replace the current VCR products.

NUON technology is designed to be embedded into the next generation of digital video products such as DVD players and set-top boxes. The powerful NUON processor provides the raw horsepower to decode digital video and audio, while delivering advanced trick modes and an enhanced user interface.

At the same time, the NUON operating system provides a powerful platform for interactive content, Hybrid DVD movies, 3D video games and many other applications.

Jamie Copland, SC&T's chairman & chief executive officer stated, ''We hope that over the next three to five years that our Per4mer NUON peripheral products will be found in the family and living rooms of every home across America.

Despite the excitement and revenue opportunities associated to the PC and video gaming arena, it pales in comparison to the mass market of the consumer electronics category, where unit sales of TVs, VCRs, CD players and home stereo systems are in the hundreds of millions.

NUON products are targeted at this much broader consumer market and will augment, and not compete with, the existing PC and Game Console categories.''

Don Thomas Jr., of VM Labs stated, ''We selected SC&T International Inc, because our primary focus in choosing business partners is to examine the standards of quality and customer support offered by those companies. SC&T clearly surpasses such expectations by demanding quality components, arranging precise manufacturing and expeditiously attending to all customer issues."

Thomas further stated, ''SC&T is growing and has proven that they are a hard working innovative company, often setting new standards and trends by adding features to their products. They also have a track record for investing great resources to issues such as ergonomics and customer's requests. VM Labs is very excited about this new alliance with SC&T International Inc."

Copland commented, ''This is a great partnership, the talent and technology at VM Labs is awesome. They have the future in their hands today. Both our companies share a common vision in wanting to shape the future of this industry.

SC&T's reputation for innovative products and its desire for partnering alliances is rapidly growing within the industry. This is ground zero. The future potential for SC&T's line of Per4mer-NUON peripheral and accessory

products is virtually limitless.''

SC&T will have prototype products on display at the VM Labs Exhibit at this month's E-3 show in Los Angeles. VM Labs, Concourse Hall, Booth No. 5018.

SC&T International Inc., develops and markets racing wheels, game controllers and sound enhancement products for the rapidly growing PC and video game arenas. Developer of the world's first Force Feed Back racing wheel, the company also holds patents, and receives licensing revenues for these technologies.

SC&T's Air Racer(TM), Per4merr, and Ultimate Per4merr, are the world's fastest growing brand names for video game and PC accessory and peripheral products. SC&T has wholly owned subsidiaries in Hong Kong and Europe, with strategic marketing alliances in Canada and South America. For further information visit SC&T's website at www.per4mer.com.

VM Labs, based in Mountain View, Calif., was founded in 1994. NUON technology represents a new standard in interactive entertainment. It provides casual and hardcore video gaming and interactive content, combined with Internet access, delivered in tandem with mass-market movie and video entertainment.

Analysts predict that digital video will replace the current analog method over the next five to 10 years. VM Labs and their partners are poised to achieve total market penetration for interactive entertainment with NUON-enhanced digital video products; the same way televisions and VCRs are now available in virtually every home in the nation.

For more information, visit VM Labs website at <http://www.vmlabs.com>

Sound Source Interactive Signs NUON Developer Agreement with VM Labs

Sound Source Interactive Inc., a leading U.S. publisher of children's interactive software, Tuesday announced that it has signed an agreement with Mountain View, Calif.-based VM Labs, to become a licensed software developer for the revolutionary NUON platform.

This technology is quickly expected to become the standard in DVD hardware.

NUON technology is designed to be embedded in the next generation of digital video products such as DVD players and set-top boxes. The powerful NUON processor provides the raw horsepower to decode digital video and audio, while delivering advanced trick modes and an enhanced user interface. At the same time, the NUON operating system provides a powerful platform for interactive content, Hybrid DVD movies, 3-D video games and many other applications.

The VM Labs software developer license allows Sound Source Interactive to develop current and future content in the NUON format. Nearly all of Sound Source Interactive's current content licenses give the company the exclusive worldwide rights to publish software for the DVD platform. The VM Labs license, in combination with those signed earlier with Sony Computer Entertainment America, a subsidiary of Sony Corp. (NYSE:SNE - news), and Nintendo of America Inc., a subsidiary of Nintendo Company LTD, provides Sound Source with the vital hardware relationships necessary to launch its game console software business into both the dedicated game console market

and the mass consumer electronic market, which includes DVD hardware.

Sound Source Interactive will have a presence at the VM Labs booth at the upcoming E3 Convention (May 13, 14 & 15, Los Angeles).

In commenting on this event, Vincent Bitetti, chairman and chief executive officer, said: "We are very excited about joining the distinguished ranks of VM Labs licensees and strategic partners and in being part of a very promising advanced home technology. NUON's content diversity and educational/entertainment breadth provide for a broad set of family resource applications. This consolidated family hardware resource is very consistent with our family-oriented software. We believe that consumer demand for NUON-enhanced DVD players will be strong and we will enjoy a very attractive opportunity with this license."

"We are pleased to have Sound Source Interactive on board," said Bill Rehbock, vice president of Third Party Development at VM Labs. "Sound Source has compelling titles based on key licensed properties that will be able to realize their full potential in the living room on NUON-enhanced DVD players."

Convergence Sports Media Announces Agreement to Develop NUON Enhanced Version of its Sports Instructional DVD Series

Convergence Sports Media (CSM) Tuesday announced that it has signed an agreement with VM Labs Inc. to develop "Elevate" sports titles using the NUON technology.

NUON is a powerful and versatile technology that transforms digital video products such as DVD players, digital satellite receivers and digital set-top boxes into interactive multimedia centers for the whole family.

The "Elevate" series leverages the Web-connected, broadband DVD platform to deliver engaging sports lessons beyond the traditional instructional category. The first DVD title, "Elevate your Golf," will be available in late summer.

Bob Fuchs, chief executive officer of CSM, said, "This venture gives us the ability to further elevate the series by offering a premium experience that uses NUON to push the boundaries of DVD."

From golf to snowboarding, car racing to fly fishing, the "Elevate series" is designed to bring out the personality of each sport. It is the first sports instructional series created to fully utilize the capabilities of the DVD format, including interactive Web features.

"The Elevate series of interactive instructional titles that Convergence Sports have developed are perfectly suited for the broad audience that NUON appeals to," said Bill Rehbock, vice president of Third Party Development at VM Labs.

CSM Chief Media Officer David Schultens said, "At the very least, Nuon will allow the 'Elevate' series to be a highly sophisticated, immersive 3-D video experience that will give our audience the ability to get a 360-degree fly through and zoom of the perfect swing. And at the same time, deliver an updated lesson from the ClubElevate.com site to the same device seamlessly."

Tim Murphy, chief development officer, added, ``The 'Elevate' series was created to converge the richness of the DVD platform with an entertaining sports learning environment. These attributes are very appealing to DVD OEM manufacturers (computers and set-top players) that are seeking DVD software to showcase their hardware lines."

The ``Elevate" series will bring a new experience to the electronic and computer audience, spotlighting previously unexplored capabilities of the DVD format.

``We are negotiating with some unconventional distribution partners that would give the 'Elevate' series the ability to be seen by millions of users in an uncluttered, highly targeted channel," Murphy said.

The ``Elevate" series will be shown to select individuals for the first time in the VM Labs booth No. 5018 at the Electronic Entertainment Exhibition (E3), May 13-15 in Los Angeles.

Ripcord Parachutes to Freedom, Eyes Console Market

Ripcord Games is now an independent company, having completed its management buyout from Panasonic Interactive Media (PIM), Ripcord will announce at E3. Without the restrictions of its former parent, it plans to move beyond PC and into the more lucrative console market, GM Lou Viveros tells mmWire.

This year, Ripcord plans to publish Spec Ops II: Green Berets; GorkaMorka; Fading Suns: Noble Armada and Legend of the Blademasters, all for PC. Next year, the company plans to publish six titles, two for PC (one of which is a DVD-ROM title), and four for console, Viveros says. While Ripcord hasn't announced specific console plans or obtained hardware licenses (it plans to begin the process at E3), obvious candidate platforms are PlayStation 2 and N64, Viveros adds. All console titles will be sequels to existing PC products; likely titles include Return Fire 3 and GorkaMorka 2.

Following the buyout, Ripcord retains rights to its trademark, logo and "Buzz" icon, the company says. It also keeps existing inventory and publishing rights to "most" of the products previously controlled by MECA, including the Spec Ops series, Return Fire 2 and Enemy Infestation. Additionally, it owns rights to ports and sequels for all Ripcord products. It expects the first console products to appear in mid 2000, most likely sequels to its more successful PC titles.

Ripcord signed a definitive agreement with PIM parent Matsushita Electric Corp. of America (MECA) last month (mmW, March 15). Terms were not disclosed.

Infogrames to Showcase Impressive Lineup of Titles at E3

Fresh from the acquisition of U.S. and European game companies Accolade and Gremlin, global powerhouse Infogrames Entertainment Inc. plans to unveil 35 titles at the Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3Expo) May 13-15.

In line with the company's multiplatform commitment, Infogrames' lineup will include nine titles for the Sony PlayStation, six for PC systems, four for the Nintendo 64, eight for Game Boy Color, three for Sega Dreamcast and five for additional platforms or the Internet.

Infogrames' presence at the event will be led by two high-profile titles, the wacky escapade "Lost in Time," based on the famous Warner Bros.' Looney Tunes characters, featuring Bugs Bunny, and the hero-based, action-adventure "Outcast."

Infogrames' headliner to the "Games for the Next Mil-Looney-Um" line of titles, "Lost in Time" lets gamers truly interact with Bugs Bunny for the first time in a series of "looney" adventures and pranks. Players duel Yosemite Sam, Marvin the Martian and other Warner Bros. characters while avoiding the shenanigans of Elmer Fudd throughout different eras of time.

The PlayStation title is slated for release in June.

Available this fall for the PC, the contender for Best of Show honors, "Outcast," uses Real Virtuality(tm) to thrust gamers into a parallel world in which the need to save humanity is secondary to a fight for survival.

Throughout the adventure, players interact with the game's multitude of characters who respond based on the friendliness or hostility of the gamer's actions. This leads to a variety of story lines and gameplay options.

Infogrames will also show the all-new adventure PC title "Silver," a good-vs.-evil fantasy that is sure to dazzle fans with its real-time combat, RPG elements and awe-inspiring graphics.

E3Expo attendees can also preview a new PlayStation title, "Eagle One," an arcade-action, aerial-combat game that lets players fly Harrier jump jets, F-16s and attack helicopters over terrorist-controlled Hawaiian islands. Infogrames plans a fall release for both "Silver" and "Eagle One."

"We'll have a great roster of A-plus titles this year at E3, headlined by 'Looney Tunes' and 'Outcast' and bolstered by the addition of the Test Drive franchise," said Jim Barnett, president and chief executive officer, Infogrames North America. "We're poised to make the show a strong launch pad for the future."

Racing titles for the PlayStation that will be shown in the Infogrames booth from newly acquired Accolade include "Test Drive 6," "Test Drive Off-Road 3" and "Demolition Racer." These titles race to stores this fall.

Infogrames' sports roster is further bolstered by "Supreme Snowboarding" for the PC and Sega Dreamcast systems. The snowboard thriller puts players down the slopes for intense aeriels and wild half-pipes. The high-end game, launching this fall, is specially designed to utilize the processing power of the new Sega Dreamcast system and 3-D-accelerated PCs.

Infogrames' hit game last year on the Nintendo 64, "Mission:Impossible," will be previewed on the PlayStation for the first time. Fans of all systems will now be able to take on the role of secret agent Ethan Hunt in a series of covert operations filled with intrigue and espionage. The PlayStation version of the blockbuster title is due this fall.

In addition, the show will offer a first glimpse of the eagerly awaited, newest addition to Infogrames' famed "Alone in the Dark" series; the

follow-up to last year's space simulation of the year "Independence War Deluxe Edition: Defiance" for the PC; and the remaining cast of Looney Tunes platform games for Nintendo 64, "Taz Express" and "Duck Dodgers."

The first of a new line of titles based on the world-famous Brazilian soccer star Ronaldo, "Brazil V-Soccer" for the PlayStation will also be on display.

For the Game Boy Color, Infogrames will show Looney Tunes-inspired titles, including "TWOUBLE," "Carrot Crazy" and "Looney Tunes Collector Series." Additional Game Boy Color titles include "The Smurfs' Nightmare," "V-Rally" and "Kluster."

Infogrames Titles to Be Shown at E3Expo 1999

TITLES	PLATFORM(S)	RELEASE DATE
Looney Tunes Line		
Bugs Bunny Lost in Time	PlayStation	Summer 1999
Taz Express	Nintendo 64	Spring 2000
Duck Dodgers	Nintendo 64	Winter 1999
Carrot Crazy	Game Boy Color	Available
TWOUBLE	Game Boy Color	Available
Collector Series	Game Boy Color	Winter 1999
I-Motion Line		
Outcast	PC	Fall 1999
	Sega Dreamcast	Summer 2000
Silver	PC	Fall 1999
Mission:Impossible	PlayStation	Fall 1999
	Nintendo 64	Available
Eagle One	PlayStation	Fall 1999
Independence War II	PC	Fall 2000
Independence War Deluxe Edition: Defiance	PC	Fall 1999
Alone in the Dark 4	Dreamcast	Fall 2000
Heart of Darkness	iMac	Fall 1999
Sports and Racing		
Supreme Snowboarding	PC	Fall 1999
	Sega Dreamcast	Fall 1999
	Game Boy Color	Winter 1999
Brazil V-Soccer	PlayStation	Spring 2000
V-Rally Edition '99	Nintendo 64	Spring 1999
	Game Boy Color	Spring 1999
Demolition Racer	PlayStation	Fall 1999
	PC	Fall 1999
Test Drive 6	PlayStation	Fall 1999
	PC	Fall 1999
	Sega Dreamcast	Fall 1999
	Game Boy Color	Fall 1999
Test Drive Off-Road 3	PlayStation	Fall 1999
	PC	Fall 1999
	Game Boy Color	Fall 1999
Game Boy Color Titles		
Smurfs Nightmare	Game Boy Color	Summer 1999

Kluster	Game Boy Color	Summer 1999
Lucky Luke	Game Boy Color	Summer 1999

Nintendo To Publish New Disney Games

A week before the biggest computer-entertainment show of the year, Disney Interactive and Nintendo of America announced Thursday a multititle deal that will bring Mickey Mouse and other Disney characters to the N64 console system.

Although the games won't be shown at the Electronic Entertainment Expo in Los Angeles next week, Disney said it believes the new games, to be published by Nintendo, will expand its reach to a platform that's becoming more popular with younger game players. Nintendo partner Rare, the U.K. developer of N64 hits including Diddy Kong Racing, Banjo Kazooie, and GoldenEye 007, will design at least two console titles featuring Mickey Mouse, said Jan Smith, senior vice president and general manager of Disney Interactive worldwide. The deal also calls for Nintendo to publish 10 games for its Game Boy Color product.

"It's a huge opportunity," said Smith, who declined to discuss financial terms of the agreement. Console systems are "becoming the entertainment choice for families and children," she said.

Nintendo is scheduled to deliver a Mickey Mouse racing title in the fourth quarter of 2000 that lets players link their N64 and Game Boy units for simultaneous play, said Smith. A Mickey adventure title is slated for 4Q 2001.

In addition, Disney Interactive said it will deliver several console games for girls this fall, based on its Beauty and the Beast and Alice in Wonderland movies. Those games could be published by Nintendo and others, and appear on multiple console systems, Smith said.

LEGO Media International to Demonstrate Four New Software Titles at E3

LEGO Media International will demonstrate four new software titles at the Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3) in Los Angeles, including LEGO Racers, the first LEGO product for the Nintendo64 and PlayStation game consoles. The other releases include LEGO Rock Raiders(tm) (PC CD-ROM, PlayStation), LEGO Friends(tm) (PC CD-ROM) and LEGOLAND (PC CD-ROM). These four new software titles follow the successful worldwide launch of LEGO Creator(tm), which was released in November 1998. According to software industry research firm PC Data, LEGO Creator was #1 in dollar sales in the home education software category in North America during the month of December 1998.

All four products will be demonstrated at the LEGO Media and LEGO MINDSTORMS(tm) shared booth space (#1524, South Hall) at E3, held in the Los Angeles Convention Center May 13-15. LEGO Media has enlisted master LEGO model designers from LEGO Systems, Inc. to create a giant model of one of the primary characters from LEGO Rock Raiders, a new game available this September for PC CD-ROM and PlayStation. The model -- which depicts the heroic Rock Raider "Jet" aboard a Hover Scout -- will be constructed

during the course of the show.

To celebrate the first LEGO products for the Nintendo 64 and PlayStation, LEGO Media has also created large-scale models of the Nintendo 64 and PlayStation game controllers. These models will be constructed before E3 and will be on display at the LEGO Media booth during the show.

In addition, LEGO Media will have a full-size model of Rocket Racer's speedy vehicle on display near the front of the booth. This 6' long, 4' tall model will be entirely constructed from LEGO Bricks. A "Guess the Bricks" contest involving the car will be used to determine which lucky E3 attendees win the PlayStation and Nintendo 64 game controller models.

LEGO Racers

Ages: 6+

Available: July 1999 (PC), August 1999 (PlayStation), September 1999

(Nintendo 64)

Retail: \$39.95 (PC) / \$49.95 (PlayStation) / \$59.95 (Nintendo 64)

Platforms: PC CD-ROM, PlayStation, Nintendo 64

Customize your own unique LEGO racecar and driver, then challenge up to five other drivers in landscapes based on four LEGO SYSTEM(tm) play themes: Castle, Town, Space and Adventurers. A unique power-up system provides players with numerous ways to gain the upper hand. Discover hidden shortcuts and secret pathways that will help you defeat challengers and become the ultimate LEGO Racer.

LEGOLAND

Ages: 6+

Available: October 1999

Retail: \$29.95

Platform: PC CD-ROM

Whether or not you've visited the newly opened LEGOLAND California theme park, you can play the LEGOLAND computer game! Design, build and manage your very own LEGOLAND theme park, complete with rides and attractions based on LEGO SYSTEM(tm) Western, Adventurers and Castle play themes. Two different play modes enhance the play experience: Free play mode allows you to enjoy your park by placing a wide variety of attractions for your guest's enjoyment, while Game mode introduces a progressive challenge that relies on your decision-making ability. As your LEGOLAND park achieves the approval of guests, you will receive rewards and surprises as you advance to the next level.

LEGO Rock Raiders

Ages: 8+

Available: September 1999 (PC), October 1999 (PlayStation)

Retail: \$39.95 (PC) / \$49.95 (PlayStation)

Platforms: PC CD-ROM, PlayStation

Based on the new LEGO SYSTEM Rock Raiders theme, this 3D action/strategy game allows you to explore, tunnel and excavate in the underground tunnels of an unexplored planet, light years from home. Establish and maintain the Rock Raiders HQ and then protect it and your teammates from the menacing Rock Monsters and other creatures of the underground. Overcome all the obstacles as you collect precious energy crystals that can be used to power your machinery and the ship's engines, and LEGO ore to build new vehicles.

LEGO Friends

Ages: 5-10

Available: September 1999

Retail: \$29.95

Platforms: PC CD-ROM

The LEGO Friends universe invites girls to explore their creative skills and express themselves as never before. The player is invited to join a group of outgoing girls, share in their everyday adventures and participate in a pop band called ``Tuff Stuff". LEGO Friends includes such fun activities as composing music, creating dance routines and preparing a show for the ultimate gig at the girl's school.

Video Game Industry Hits Back Over Colo. Shooting

The video game industry came out swinging Thursday at critics who say violent video games were one of the causes of the Columbine High School shooting in Littleton, Colorado.

Leaders of the \$6.3 billion industry said at the start of its biggest trade show that games should not be blamed for last month's shooting by two teenagers, who killed 12 students and a teacher before turning their guns on themselves.

``Since Littleton, this industry has been scrutinized like never before...resulting in a portrayal that has not been accurate at all times," Douglas Lowenstein, president of the Interactive Digital Software Association, told reporters at the E3 trade show.

He said that in last year's list of the 10 most popular games, only two were considered violent and rated ``extreme for mature audiences" under the industry's voluntary rating system.

He said the current scrutiny of the video game industry by U.S. legislators was more intense than in previous years, such as the time when a game called Mortal Kombat came under fire.

``The concern among politicians is greater than before," said Lowenstein, who attended this week's White House meeting on violence. ``This frankly has set us back."

After Monday's closed-door session in Washington, President Clinton urged

the entertainment industry to think twice before making violent movies, games of discs.

'We have to ask the people who produce things to consider the consequences of them, whether it's a violent movie, a CD, a video game," he told reporters. 'If they are made, they at least should not be marketed to children."

Littleton gunmen Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold were part of a clique whose members wore black trenchcoats and played violent video games such as Quake and Doom.

Don Tapscott, chairman of a think tank called Alliance for Converging Technologies, said they gravitated to the images of violent video games like these 'to express their psychosis."

'The best the government can do is back off from any draconian legislation that would ban any content," he said.

Tapscott said no connection had been shown between video games and tragic incidents such as Littleton, and suggested parents should talk more to their children.

'Gee, your kid is walking out the door with a swastika, it's time to have a conversation," he said.

He said countless studies had linked youth violence to factors such as poverty, lack of parental involvement, family violence, untreated mental illness, the proliferation of guns, substance abuse and wars over illegal drugs.

Bloody Games Don't Breed Violence

A trade show full of game and entertainment executives were told Thursday they are not responsible for the teen violence displayed in such places as Littleton, Colo.

Instead of blaming the Internet and computer games for violent behavior, society should be doing more research, said Don Tapscott, chairman of the new media think tank Alliance for Converging Technology, during the opening keynote at the Electronic Entertainment Expo.

Video games, the Internet and "geek culture" have been the main targets of societal scorn since the April tragedy in Littleton that left 15 people dead.

"Kids can tell the difference between what's in a game and what is real," said Tapscott. "When I asked my kid if he thought games were making him more aggressive, he said, 'It's only a game, Dad.'"

Looking for scapegoats for societal ills is not new, he said.

"In 1977, 70 percent of a Gallup poll said TV caused crime," Tapscott said. "Today, schools are banning Goths, suspending students that express feelings of self isolation. They are banning what they don't understand."

Tapscott, who has written several books on the effects of the Internet and

From: Curt Vendel <cvendel@worldnet.att.net>

Pong Anyone? The Rise and Fall of Atari.

An article and video clip by News Media, the article/video talk about Atari with an interview with Curt Vendel from Atari's Historical Society as well as the man without whom Atari would not exist... Nolan Bushnell.

Pong Anyone? Article:

<<http://www.newmedianews.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/newmedianews/archive/1999/05/07/TSatari.dtl>>

Curt Vendel
The Atari Historical Society
www.atari-history.com

=~==~==

A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Sears To Sell Apple iMacs In More Than 800 Stores

Apple Computer Inc.'s curvy, translucent iMac computer will be on the shelves of more than 800 Sears, Roebuck & Co. stores by the Memorial Day weekend, the companies said Monday.

Apple's interim Chief Executive Steve Jobs made the announcement at the company's worldwide developer conference in San Jose. He also introduced what the company says are the fastest notebook computers available.

In his keynote address, Jobs ticked off a list of Apple's latest accomplishments, including paring its inventory down to one day, boosted cash reserves and the vastly popular iMac. First-time computer buyers account for 32 percent of iMac purchases, Jobs said.

"We're really excited about this," Jobs told more than 2,500 software developers gathered at the annual conference. Cupertino, Calif.-based Apple said attendance is up 43 percent from last year, setting a record for paid attendance.

As expected, Jobs gave an overview of the Macintosh operating system and the latest version of its QuickTime multimedia software. The PowerBook laptops are 20 percent thinner than their predecessors, sport faster microprocessors and have longer battery life.

"These are the fastest portables in the marketplace," Jobs said.

In the past 10 days, Apple stock has climbed due to a big recommendation by Goldman Sachs and as investors bet on new products being announced or demonstrated at the conference.

Since Jobs took the reigns at Apple again in September 1997, he and his management team have led Apple back into the black, focused the company's product development and introduced snazzy new products like the consumer-oriented iMac. Jobs, a co-founder of Apple, was ousted in 1985 in a boardroom coup.

In fiscal 1998, Apple reported its first full year of profits in three years and has reported consecutive profits since.

At last year's conference, Jobs announced Mac OS X, the next generation of the Macintosh operating system, which he said could be Apple's biggest leap in technology since 1984, when it introduced the first Macintosh computer.

Jobs also said the latest version of its current Mac OS, 8.6, is now available and will be around until Apple introduces OS X, which will be available early next year.

Jobs and other executives gave a peek into some of the new features of Mac OS X, such as an e-mail program built right into the operating system, as well as a sophisticated yet intuitive file finder system.

In order to make it easier for developers to bring their applications from older versions of Mac OS over to Mac OS X, Apple has created a programming interface it calls Carbon.

Jobs also showed some of the four new trailers for the upcoming film ``Star Wars Episode I, The Phantom Menace.'' Apple teamed up with Lucasfilm to put the first live video clip over the Internet, using Apple's QuickTime 4.0 multimedia software which now has video and audio streaming capabilities.

Many of the Macintosh faithful were hoping that the company also may give a sneak preview of its much-rumored consumer portable device, which has been described in published reports as a portable iMac. Jobs mentioned the product, and said it would be available ``later this year."

Analysts who follow Apple said it was not a likely forum for Jobs to show or introduce the product, which will be targeted to consumers and the education market.

Jobs Pumps Up the Mac Faithful

Apple delivered the first developer preview of Mac OS X's client version on Monday along with a wide range of announcements during its annual Worldwide Developers Conference in San Jose, Calif.

Besides spelling out new details about its next-generation desktop operating system -- now slated to ship early next year -- interim CEO Steve Jobs used his keynote presentation at WWDC to announce the immediate availability of Mac OS 8.6 and offer a "sneak peek" of an interim OS upgrade code-named Sonata that is due to ship this fall.

In other news, Apple unveiled a new iMac distribution deal with Sears Roebuck and Co. and debuted two new PowerBook G3 models whose processors

use copper-based technology.

Apple executives drew the most complete picture yet of Mac OS X, which they said will build on the Darwin core of Mac OS X Server and feature Quartz, a new graphics and windowing layer based on Adobe Systems Inc.'s Portable Document Format. According to Jobs and Senior Vice President for Software Engineering Avadis Tevanian, the native version of PDF will add extensive compositing support, including built-in support for alpha channels.

On top of Quartz, Mac OS X will offer native support for "classic" Mac apps (formerly known as the Blue Box); a Carbon option for Mac OS X-optimized software; and Cocoa, which will offer native support for Java applications. Vice President for Worldwide Marketing Phil Schiller demonstrated a revamped Finder and a Mail Viewer e-mail client running atop Carbon and Cocoa, respectively.

Tevanian said the preview version of Mac OS X, available immediately to WWDC attendees, includes Version 3.0 of the Mach kernel, the Quartz imaging layer and a new compiler. Jobs and Tevanian said that a second preview version will ship to developers in the fall.

Schiller came onstage to outline Sonata's enhancements, including Version 2 of Apple's Sherlock Internet search utility and built-in features that will allow multiple users to maintain individual preferences on a single computer.

According to Schiller, Sherlock 2 will include interface enhancements, allow users to switch between sets of search plug-ins, and offer fast access to custom searches that poll major Web information services and display results based on the type of information requested. To illustrate the new feature, Schiller demonstrated Sherlock 2's ability to display appropriate results based on a search for an individual or when comparison shopping among e-commerce sites.

Under Sonata, users will also be able to customize the desktop and set access to applications and files, Schiller said. Sonata's personalized security features will include allowing individual users to log on using their own "voice signature." Schiller demonstrated a built-in Keychain capability that will allow users to unlock access to all the servers they access via a single password.

Jobs and Tevanian said Mac OS 8.6 -- available now to Mac OS 8.5 owners as a free download -- packs significant kernel enhancements that offer improvements such as extended battery life for portable systems.

Jobs announced that Apple's version of the OpenGL 3D API and Version 2.1.2 of its Mac OS Runtime for Java are available now from Apple's Web site. Jobs said MRJ 2.1.2 is five times faster than its predecessor, with a Caffeine mark of nearly 7,000.

Jobs and Tevanian wowed the WWDC crowd with a "technology demonstration" of forthcoming Mac support for Sun's Java 2 format. Their tag-team bake-off showed a 400-MHz G3 running a Java 2 animation four times faster than a 500-MHz Pentium III system.

While he brushed aside rumors of a WWDC debut for Apple's consumer notebook, Jobs, unveiled two new professional-level G3 PowerBooks. Jobs said the 400-MHz PowerBook G3 will sell for \$3,499 and a 333-MHz model for \$2,499. The new PowerBooks are 20 percent thinner and 2 pounds lighter than

current models, and extending the laptops' battery life 90 minutes -- now able to run five hours on a single charge.

The PowerBooks will ship May 20 with 10/100Base T Ethernet, 64 Mbytes of RAM and USB connectors, Jobs said. The 400-MHz model will have a 6-Gbyte hard drive and a DVD drive; the 333-MHz model will have a 4-Gbyte hard drive and a CD-ROM drive.

In another widely rumored development, Jobs announced that Sears has signed on as a retail outlet for Apple's most popular Mac, with iMacs expected to go on sale on Memorial Day, May 31, at more than 800 Sears Roebuck and Co. stores nationwide.

Apple Unveils New PowerBook

Apple Computer Inc. interim CEO Steve Jobs gave computer programmers a taste of the future Monday, unveiling a faster and more powerful PowerBook laptop for professionals, new speech recognition software and a deal to sell the popular iMac desktop computers at Sears, Roebuck and Co. stores.

"I don't think there's ever been a better time to be a Mac developer," Jobs told more than 2,500 programmers at Apple's annual Worldwide Developer Conference in San Jose.

The new PowerBook G3 is 20 percent thinner and almost two pounds lighter than its predecessor. The top models, selling for \$3,500, come with DVD players and batteries that last up to 5 hours, allowing users to watch entire movies.

Jobs said that Dragon Systems Inc. is creating Macintosh-compatible products based on Dragon NaturallySpeaking, the top-selling retail speech recognition software.

Dragon Systems Janet Baker said their company has received many requests for a Macintosh version.

Jobs also announced that Sears will offer the iMac and a wide range of iMac peripherals to its customers by Memorial Day weekend.

Court Broadens Class In Microsoft 'Permatemp' Case

In a case that could have broad ramifications for labor relations in the technology industry, an appeals court ruled that thousands of temporary workers for Microsoft Corp. are eligible for stock options.

In a ruling handed down late Wednesday, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals significantly expanded the class of workers eligible to apply for damages in a long-running lawsuit against the software giant.

Rather than just a relatively narrow group of so-called "permatemp" employees who worked for Microsoft from 1987 to 1990, the appeals court ruled the company's lucrative stock option plan must be opened to all "common law" employees from 1986 to the present.

That could make well over 10,000 past and present workers eligible for damages based on stock options they should have received years ago, said David Stobaugh, attorney for the plaintiffs in the long-running lawsuit.

Stobaugh said the ruling could be read broadly to mean that temporary employees and contract workers at companies throughout the Western region served by the appeals court can claim the same benefits as full-time staffers.

''It's now very clear that Microsoft should immediately stop treating its temp agency employees like second class citizens," said Stephen Strong, another plaintiffs' attorney. ''This is a victory against employers who create two-tiered benefit plans that penalize many of their workers."

Microsoft, which has been battling the class action for years, had no immediate comment.

But the decision was met with outrage from other companies in the technology sector, which depends heavily on temporary workers and independent contractors.

''If this ruling stands it could effectively destroy the ability of companies to set up businesses for which they contract out workers," said Harris Miller, president of the Information Technology Association of America.

He and others argued that technology companies in particular rely on temporary workers because of fast-changing market conditions and a scarcity of labor.

Technology workers often prefer temporary assignments because it gives them greater flexibility and, unlike regular employees, they get paid for every hour they work, said Toby Malara of the National Technical Services Association, which represents agencies employing more than 300,000 people.

''We've had more than a few people tell us they've turned down full-time employment with the firm they're working for because it would be financially disadvantageous to them," Malara said.

But a 1997 study by the Bureau of Labor Statistics found that 60 percent of temporary workers surveyed would prefer permanent jobs, said a spokeswoman for the AFL-CIO, the nation's largest labor group.

Since running afoul of federal tax laws in 1990, Microsoft has relied on outside agencies to bring in temporary workers, who technically are employed by those agencies.

But the appeals court ruling destroyed any notion that Microsoft could avoid its obligations to provide stock options and other benefits by using the agencies.

''Even if for some purposes a worker is considered an employee of the agency, that would not preclude his status of common law employee of Microsoft," the three-judge panel said in a unanimous, 28-page ruling. ''The two are not mutually exclusive."

That effectively opens the stock option plan to any temporary or contract worker who meets its requirements of having worked at least half-time for five months of any year since the company went public in 1986. Under the plan, thousands of Microsoft employees have become millionaires by buying

discounted stock through payroll deductions.

The ruling could be appealed, or the two sides could return to federal district court in Seattle, where they have been arguing over how to determine the value of stock options that were never granted.

Pentium III Prices to Fall Sunday

PC chip maker Intel Corp. will drop prices by as much as 35 percent on Sunday, including deep cuts on the company's two-month old Pentium III, said a source familiar with the cuts.

In addition, Intel will announce new speeds for its mobile and desktop processors.

Intel's aggressive price cutting is becoming standard practice as it attempts to outpace Advanced Micro Devices Inc. and other rival chip makers. The latest price slashes seem planned to quickly shift customers to its Pentium III line, rolled out in March.

"Many of the price changes are driven by Intel's desire to phase out the Pentium II products," said Mike Feibus, industry analyst with chip watcher Mercury Research Inc.

It's no surprise then that the biggest cuts will be on the prices of Intel's Pentium III processors. The price tag of the 450MHz chip will drop 35 percent to \$268, while the price of the 500MHz chip will fall 24 percent to \$482, according to the source.

Typically, PC makers cut the prices of their products following a reduction in Intel's price list. This latest round could mean quickly declining price tags on Pentium III systems.

Prices on the Pentium II are falling as well, with the 450MHz Pentium II dropping 32 percent to \$268 and the 400MHz version dropping 21 percent to \$193.

An oddity of Intel's phase-out strategy is that both the 450MHz Pentium II and the 450MHz Pentium III are priced identically.

Intel also cut prices on Celeron processor by up to 21 percent, said the source. Intel would not confirm nor comment on the cuts.

The chip giant also plans to introduce a 550MHz Pentium III processor for its desktop lineup as well as a 366MHz mobile Celeron processor, said the source.

Both processors increase the top speeds of their respective processor family by 10 percent.

That's par for the course this year, said Feibus. "For the next year, we are looking at bump ups in performance with no change in architecture," he said.

The latest Pentium III will sell in lots of 1,000 units for \$744, while the new mobile processor will cost \$170.

Online Video Calling Made Easier

A startup company will introduce a system that would let users of a popular videoconferencing protocol find each other on the Internet.

Visitalk.com, a Phoenix-based company, will debut its Permanent Communications Number systems at the Networld+Interop show in Las Vegas next week. The company has signed up White Pine Software, makers of the CU-SeeMe conferencing program, as a "premier partner."

Until now, CU-SeeMe users could not call someone unless they knew the specific IP address they wished to reach. A new service, Internet Locator Service, was recently established to help users track each other down. Users log onto one of dozens of servers, but they have no way to know which server another person has logged onto, or to find someone who is not logged on.

The Visitalk.com system assigns each user his or her own ID number, but does not require a fixed IP address. Whenever a user logs on, the system detects what their IP address is and sets up a router to that address. That would allow a user to log in from any device that has an IP connection, but maintain the same ID.

Visitalk.com works with the h.323 protocol, a standard for sending video and voice data over packet-switched networks as the Internet. It will list PCNs in a central database, so that people can find a connection to a person whether they're logged in or not. And the company will accept messages for clients who are not currently online, and save them in a voice mail box.

"For first time you can use [h.323 clients] effectively as a permanent presence on the Net," said Michael O'Donnell president and co-founder of Visitalk.com. "Right now, ILS amounts to a temporary directory -- when you log on you appear and when you log off you disappear."

Visitalk.com officials are hoping that their system will take off and become a central directory for H.323 users, similar to the white pages. Their goal is to establish the Visitalk.com site as a portal of sorts, and create revenue by selling ad space.

"If White Pine's software is the client, the way a browser is a client, then Visitalk.com is the portal. So we as a portal will [try and get the] the traditional revenue stream -- advertising to people who enjoy the benefit of the systems," O'Donnell said.

White Pine has agreed to promote the new system to its users, who number between 3.5 million and four million, said White Pine exec Scott Cavanagh. The company will make the Visitalk.com directory a default directory in the new versions of its products.

"This has been a service that's been lacking, it's greatly in need and will be embraced by the community," he said.

Lucent Technologies Inc. said Monday it has distilled the functions of five computer chips into a single chip for telephones that carry voice on Internet networks.

Lucent, the world's largest telecommunications equipment maker, is calling its new invention "'Phone-On-A-Chip," and will unveil the tiny processor this week at the Networld + Interop trade show in Las Vegas. The chip will not be marketed until some time next year, the company said.

Murray Hill, N.J.-based Lucent said the chip should cut the electronics cost of the specialized phones 30 percent.

It expected initial interest would come from small- and medium-sized businesses that want to design their in-house networks using Internet technology for voice as well as data.

That technology requires the use of specially-designed phones, which currently sell for \$250 or more each. These phones are different from the mobile "'Web phones" used to access the Internet for voice and data.

Internet telephones typically require several chips to perform multiple functions, while Lucent has 13 functions including core processing, analog-to-digital conversion, and amplification, packed into the new design, it said.

To get to market quickly, Lucent plans to offer a two-chip product by the fourth quarter of this year, priced at less than \$30 for quantities of 100,000. The single chip version will be tailored to market needs for a later release, a spokesman said.

Lucent wants to get feedback from manufacturers, after which it may cut out some of the features and memory of the initial model in order to help phone makers keep their prices low.

Woman Sues To Use '7 Dirty Words'

A woman is suing a company that assigns U.S. Internet addresses for the right to use George Carlin's "'seven dirty words."

The federal lawsuit filed by Lynn Haberstroh of Raymond seeks to force Network Solutions Inc., a private company that registers the most popular Web names under contract from the government, to allow her to register those words in addresses.

"'There's a well-defined First Amendment right that is being violated," said Jonathan Springer, Haberstroh's lawyer.

A California company called Seven Words filed a similar lawsuit in that state, after Haberstroh filed hers in January, Springer said.

NSI says it merely is following long-established policy on public communication. Carlin's seven words - from an old comedy routine - describe body parts, functions and sexual acts and are banned from the airwaves by the Federal Communications Commission as part of court-upheld restrictions on obscenity. The words effectively are kept off the air by laws forbidding vulgar speech that date at least to the Radio Act of 1927 and which were

upheld in a \$1.7 million FCC fine against radio personality Howard Stern in 1995.

NSI, which did not respond to phone messages seeking comment on last week, has asked to move Halberstroh's suit to Virginia, where the company is based.

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